

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is John Lee. I'm a resident of New Haven and a member of New Haven Rising. I'm testifying in support of a rent cap and HB 6588 with changes to better protect tenants.

This past summer, my landlord tried to raise our rent more than 20% with no warning. We've lived in our house since 2019, and each year, the rent increased by only 5%. The 20% increase would've pushed us out, so we reached out to our landlord. Per usual, they were unresponsive. Every year, we've put in the same requests for repairs in our unit. We've also communicated our growing concerns with the house's utilities and structural integrity. The porch becomes noticeably more slanted every season. Come winter, we don't know whether our heating system will work. The back bedroom gets below 40°. The family that lives on the first floor of the house, a couple and their five young children, have lived in our house for over a decade. They often tell us how our landlords never fix anything, even after promising to.

Luckily for us, a former coworker of mine works at New Haven's Fair Rent Commission. She advised me to open up a case. With a letter from the commission in hand, having already visited the leasing office multiple times, I was able to negotiate the 20% increase down to 10%. But my roommates and I had already started looking at new places. I thought I'd have to leave the community I felt most connected to and my neighbors whom I've grown to trust and care for. If I hadn't had that connection at the commission, I wouldn't have even known there was a process.

During my employment at the education nonprofit LEAP and beyond, I've seen too many young people born and raised in New Haven forced to move out of our city due to sudden rent increases and a lack of safe, affordable housing. They're forced to change schools and leave family members and the community they grew up with. This situation is only getting worse. I know how difficult it feels to believe that any recourse or accountability from an absent landlord is realistic or worth pushing for. I can only imagine how much more extreme that feeling must be for my friends and neighbors who are long term renters and suffer additional layers of unequal opportunity and discrimination in their education and employment, the real, lasting legacy of racism and segregated development in New Haven and all our cities. Therefore, this legislation and the organizing behind it is a critical opportunity to materially protect and empower our most vulnerable communities. I strongly support a rent cap and suggest the following changes to strengthen HB 6588:

- **The cap should be lower—I suggest 2.5%.** This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be more affordable for tenants.
- **It should cover the time between tenants' leases** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- **It should expand good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants, so they have greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,
John Lee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Lee".